

I've Looked at Love from Both Sides Now by osaki_nana_707

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Billy and Steve talk.

Then, do more than talk.

I've Looked at Love from Both Sides Now

Author's Note:

Please read the others before this one or this one won't make sense. :)

I've Looked at Love from Both Sides Now

Billy loses his nerve too slowly.

It's sort of refreshing, he guesses, since he's been in the practice of losing his nerve too fast. This time it doesn't start creeping up on him until after he's marched up the walkway and knocked loudly on Steve's front door. It creeps, and creeps, and creeps, and then it's there, slithering up his throat, clawing towards his eyes, and he's so full of it that it makes him want to take off running.

But he's paralyzed.

The door opens. It's too late.

He steels his resolve. He's been a coward long enough, he reminds himself. He came here with determination and it's not like it's the first time he's gone bolting headlong into danger. He can do this. He *needs* to do this. If he doesn't get this shit off his chest, he's surely going to suffocate.

...but that doesn't mean he still can't hesitate a little.

"Where's Katie?" he asks, only afterwards realizing that maybe a 'hello' or something might have made that seem less accusatory. Steve is standing in the doorway, his expression one of confusion and surprise. His hands are damp, and there's a dish towel thrown over his shoulder. There's music playing from somewhere inside the house, but Billy can't place what the song is from the outside.

"Uh," Steve says, blinking. "Yeah, nice to see you too, Billy. You decided to just start talking to me again now?"

Billy feels the sting of the words, but it's deserved so he doesn't react.

"Katie's at the sleepover with Hannah. I thought... wait, you knew that, didn't you? She said you packed her pajamas and swimsuit into her backpack."

There is a beat of silence between them as they both become simultaneously aware that she lied.

"Fuck," Steve says, drawing the word out, scrubbing a hand over his face. "I... Okay, I'm sorry, alright? I can go get her--"

"No, it's-- fine," Billy says, slowly, then all at once.

Steve goes quiet as they stare at each other. His eyes are soft, and Billy wonders if Steve looks at everyone like that. He doesn't think he does.

"Do you wanna come in?" Steve asks.

Billy's heart skips. "Yeah," he says.

Steve doesn't appear to have expected the answer. Billy can't really blame him for that. He thinks that, if he were Steve, he'd slam the door in his face and never look back, but Steve has more goodness in him than Billy ever has. He's *too good* for him, and he knows this, but...

He still fell.

Slowly, then all at once.

The door shuts behind him. He's inside.

Now that he's here he can hear the music more clearly. It's Joni Mitchell, he realizes. He recognizes the song as it bubbles up from the furthest part of his memories, sitting in the passenger seat of his mother's little red Camaro with her singing along in the driver's seat, the wind blowing her long waves of blonde hair. He's so young in the memory, so young that his feet don't touch the floor of the car.

"You leave 'em laughing when you go, and if you care, don't let them

know, don't give yourself away ,” Joni sings.

He feels suddenly so young here too, in the present. So young and with his feet off the floor.

Fuck it.

“I needed to talk to you,” Billy says.

They're in the kitchen by then, Steve back at the sink so that he can finish washing his dishes. He doesn't look up when Billy says it, but his shoulders jump a little in reaction, like Billy's hit him. He starts scrubbing at a plate a little harder than necessary, and there's frustration there. There's hurt. Steve doesn't wave his anger around like a stick of dynamite though. His anger has been trained into pettiness and passive-aggressive behavior. Billy's been the subject of it before, but it hasn't been since he'd been trying to get a rise out of him in high school. It's been long enough now that it feels like a wound. Another deserved wound.

Steve ignores him basically, just like he did in high school, and Billy aches, and aches, and *aches* .

“Steve,” Billy says, and it feels like someone has split his voice open with a knife, like his throat has been gouged. It sounds normal to his ears though.

“Look,” Steve says, “I get it. I do. It's a lot of shit. I shouldn't have told you about it. I shouldn't have done a lot of things. I wasn't in my head right, so that's my bad.” He doesn't sound regretful. His words are dripping with the annoyance that's been probably building up since Billy started giving him the silent treatment.

“I don't care about that,” Billy says, then corrects, “I mean. I *do* . I do care that monsters are fucking real, but that's not what I'm here to talk to you about.”

Steve smiles. It's not a pleasant expression. “You gonna kiss me and run off again?” he asks.

It takes every fiber in Billy's body not to react to that.

"I'm just saying," Steve says casually, too casually, as he puts the plate in the strainer and dries his hands on the towel, finally making eye contact, "it's getting a little old, Billy. So if you're here to talk about this, then that's good. It's good we get it over with."

"Get it over with," Billy repeats slowly, brows knitting together.

"Yeah," Steve says, tossing the towel onto the strainer. "Get it over with."

He looks so tired. Billy thinks some of those dark circles under his eyes are his fault. A lot of things are his fault.

"I'm not mad at you," Steve says, though he could have fooled Billy. Admittedly, Steve's tone is gentler this time. "I get this part too, okay? You've got... a lot going on when it comes to... all this. A lot of baggage attached to it." He waves his hand vaguely at Billy's form. "You can't deal with it. And that's fine, alright? It's fine. I just-- I can't--"

The anger's back, but it's tilting more in the direction of frustration. He runs his hands through his hair and turns away, pacing the kitchen, desperately seeking something to do with his hands. "I can't keep waiting around for you to figure this shit out, Billy. So let's talk about it. Let's get it over with. I know what you're here for."

Billy opens his mouth. He's relatively certain that Steve *doesn't* know, but Steve doesn't give him time to protest. Considering Billy's come over here to talk to him, he's certainly not doing a lot of talking. Apparently Steve's had a lot to say these last few weeks, staring out the window at the car, his patience growing thinner.

"It's not the first time I've been dumped," Steve says, and these words are more alarming than anything Steve's said all evening. Billy's a little dumbstruck by them.

Steve continues, laughing a little bitterly. "I don't even think I can be dumped considering we never were an actual thing, but it's fine. It's *fine*." Steve's grim smile over the word 'fine' makes Billy think he has some unpleasant association with that word, though he has no idea what it is.

"There's all sorts of reasons not to do this, after all," Steve keeps rambling on, still pacing around the kitchen. "This is a small town. A lot of people would talk. It would get out eventually. That might make things harder on Katie and Hannah. You and I are both pretty committed to the Dad thing, and something like this would probably get in the way of that a little bit. Besides, I'm shit at being in relationships apparently, since I keep getting dumped and it's always my fault. You're quick to cut and run as it is. It's admirable, really, knowing when to get the fuck out."

It doesn't sound admirable.

"So," Steve says, turning back on him suddenly, his energy frantic, even if his body suddenly isn't. "Just fucking say it. Get it over with. Tell me you don't wanna do this anymore, and it'll be fine. Katie can still come over here. Nothing has to change. I just need to know the fucking *line*, man."

Billy is still watching him. He's not sure if he should actually speak because he might get interrupted again. His fire is simmering a little, and the anger surprises him in a way it hasn't in a while. He'd come here with full intention of--

Of--

Talking.

That was as far as he'd gotten, wasn't it?

Fuck.

"*Billy*," Steve says, long-suffering.

"Oh, is it my turn?" Billy asks, and despite, or perhaps because, his realization that he has no idea what he's supposed to do, his agitation is still very present.

Steve's lips flatten into a line. Billy has the urge to push further, to get Steve's fire burning just like he did in the Byers' house ten years ago.

Maybe it's a good thing that the idea of it sickens him now.

“I thought it’d be fine if I talked,” Steve says, “since you didn’t seem interested in talking to me for weeks. Do you think that’s cool? That that’s fine? Because it’s not. It’s not a good message for you to teach Katie either, showing her that avoiding your problems until they get too big is a solution. It’s not a *solution*, Billy, it isn’t, trust me, I know--”

“So, it’s not my turn then.”

Steve’s mouth clamps shut. His face is flushed.

Billy longs for a cigarette. He uses his mouth in a different way instead. “I’ve been watching the shit people around me are going through. Hop. And Max. And you. It’s heavy shit. Not just the monsters, but... all of it. And I’m not like Hop, or Max, or you, y’know? I’m not... the fuckin’ hero. I’m not the guy to stand up in the face of something that’s fucking terrifying and tell it to bring it the fuck on because I’ve been on the losing end of that shit when I didn’t even sign up for it. I don’t fight if I don’t know I’m gonna win because I’m a fucking coward. I’ve been a coward, and I’m still a coward, and I...”

Billy hesitates. Steve waits.

Steve always waits.

“I’m scared,” Billy admits, voice softer and more tender than he’s ever heard come out of his own mouth. A part of him recoils from the vulnerability of it, but he tries to ignore it.

Steve doesn’t move but the air around him softens. He doesn’t say anything, seemingly wanting to hang onto his anger because, like always, it’s easier than everything else. Billy’s tired of easy though. It always leads to a lukewarm conclusion.

He stares at the floor, fists balled at his sides. He’s not a talker. He’s never been good at expressing his emotions with words. It’s not something that men do, and even if that’s not true, it’s certainly not something Billy does. He’s been honest with Max though. He can be honest with Steve. Even if it is harder than a punch to the face.

“You’re right,” he says finally, after the silence stretches on too long. “I do cut and run. It’s not admirable. It’s just a survival instinct... When shit gets bad, leave. It’s what my mom did. I didn’t wanna be like my dad, so I tried to take after her instead, I guess... but she always went back, and it destroyed her. The day I saw you in the classroom at Parents’ Day, I thought I was following that path exactly, that I was gonna let you destroy me, and when I lost control of myself and kissed you, I knew I was really fucked.

“It would’ve been so much easier, y’know? If you’d shoved me off, if you’d acted disgusted, if you’d hated me like you were supposed to. That was how it always played out in my head, back in high school. I’d lose it and make a move and you’d beat the shit out of me, and I’d fucking let you. I’d let you win that fight because I thought, if I let him win, maybe he won’t tell anyone that I’m...” He trails off. The floor is blurry beneath him.

Steve steps forward. Once. Again. They’re sharing the same space with just these two steps. Billy can see Steve’s feet when he blinks and his vision momentarily clears. He still doesn’t look up, not even when Steve’s hands slide over his jaw, not even when Steve’s thumbs brush away the tears that have made it about halfway down his face. Steve has to eventually, very gently, force his chin upwards.

Billy feels so young, so young, so young.

“I’m scared,” he repeats again, and he’s not Billy Hargrove of now, or Billy Hargrove of the 1980s. He’s the little boy in the car as it flies too fast down the highway as his mother runs from his father towards nowhere, her eye blackened, and her voice singing loud through the tears. He’s the little boy that sat in that passenger seat as they ran away the time before that. He’s the same little boy that sat in that passenger seat when, broke and helpless, they always came back. The same little boy who overheard Neil’s empty promises to change, to put down the bottle, to love them because *we’re a family* . The same little boy who believed it until he didn’t.

Steve... he...

He pulls him close, wraps his arms around him, and Billy’s just standing there, his face in the crook of Steve’s neck, being held. He

can't...

He can't remember the last time he's been held like this.

Has he ever been held like this?

Fresh tears well up, but he tries to force them back down. Crying like a bitch isn't going to accomplish anything right now, fuck.

"Are you apologizing to me?" Steve asks, an echo of their conversation in the car on Parents' Day.

Billy doesn't get irritable this time. Instead, he says, muffled in the warm skin of Steve's neck, "Yeah. I am apologizing to you."

"I forgive you," Steve says, simple and light, like it's so easy and...

Billy can't remember the last time he's been forgiven either.

His hands come up and around Steve, pulling him closer. He pulls him close and he feels like he's breathing for the first time in his life. He sags against him, the heaviness on his shoulders sloughs off of him and it's bizarre because there's been a weight there for so long that he doesn't know what to do without it. He thinks wildly that holding onto Steve is the only thing keeping him from floating up and hitting the goddamned ceiling.

All he forgave him for was this slight, but it feels like more. The way Steve lowers his face, let's his lips just barely brush against the shell of Billy's ear, makes Billy think Steve knows that too.

They stand like that for a while, right up until Billy feels like he must have overstayed his welcome. His nerves come creeping back to him, and he loosens his hold, the urge to run returning as natural as the air in his lungs.

But.

Steve.

He doesn't let go. His arms are looped around Billy's waist, holding him here in this kitchen, his big, brown eyes soft, and he says two

words.

“Don’t go.”

In a night of things Billy can’t remember encountering, he’s pretty sure this is the third one in a row. This one though, he’s certain. No one has ever asked him to stay.

One hand comes off of Billy’s waist, then the other, like Steve’s testing to see if he’s going to bolt. He doesn’t. There’s suddenly nowhere else he’d rather be.

“It’s okay,” Steve says, hands sliding over Billy’s shoulders, tugging him back in. There is barely a breath of air between them, and then there isn’t even that. This time, for once, Steve’s the one to initiate, and Billy lets him, eyelashes fluttering closed as he kisses back, hands finding their way into Steve’s hair.

Steve presses Billy against the counter, but it’s a gentle push, just another step forward. Billy’s heart starts thrumming, and he feels himself cracking open, letting Steve’s light flood into him, fill him, warm him up in a way his fire never did. This sunlight coating his bones makes him feel young but without the fear.

Lying on the sand in the sunshine, the sky clear blue above him, the ocean lapping against the shore. That perfect moment he remembers, and it’s only now overshadowed by this.

He slots their legs together and breaks the kiss only to catch a breath, and then he’s diving in again, letting his tongue explore. Steve gives as good as he gets and honestly more because he is *very* good at this. Their previous two kisses had been so desperate and overwhelming that Billy hadn’t taken the time to appreciate it, but Steve’s the best kisser he’s ever experienced. It kind of makes his knees weak if he’s being honest with himself.

His tongue isn’t the only thing that starts exploring. His hands find their way under the hem of Steve’s t-shirt and up the planes of his back. Steve makes a small sound that rattles around in Billy’s mouth, slides down his throat, through his heartstrings, and further still, and oh, fuck, oh, *fuck* --

They part. Steve's face is flushed, his lips swollen, his pupils blown, and his chest is heaving. "Don't go," he says again, as if he's afraid Billy's going to cut and run again, and to be fair, it's not like experience has told him anything otherwise.

"I'm not goin' anywhere," Billy says, voice low and wrecked, "except upstairs."

Steve stares at him a moment. His eyes then dart away, and he looks almost shy. "Are you... uh... are you sure you...?" The rest of the question hangs in the air unfinished.

Billy answers it anyway. "Yeah."

Steve lets out a breathless, soundless, slightly hysterical and giddy laugh. Billy's relatively certain this isn't how Steve expected his evening to go.

"Okay," Steve says. "Uh... o--okay."

"Do you not want to?" Billy asks, raising an eyebrow. He's still warmed from the kiss, enjoying watching Steve squirm a little. He never has been able to help himself in that aspect.

"Of course I fucking do," Steve says immediately, then seems to realize after that it may have come across as too eager.

It turns Billy on.

The trip up to Steve's bedroom is slowed with several detours-- backs against walls, mouths against skin, hands seeking. It's a blur of heat and feeling. Steve seems fond of Billy's ass; Billy is partial to Steve's neck.

They stumble and tumble up the stairs and into Steve's bedroom, and then Billy's got him on the bed, got his mouth on that glorious neck and--

"Wait," Steve says.

Billy freezes.

“You said you’d never gone into a fight you knew you couldn’t win. Ten years ago, when we fought, you knew you were gonna win?”

Billy’s silent for a beat. “Are you fucking with me right now?” Then, “Of course I was gonna win. You got your ass kicked by Byers. You think I didn’t know about that?”

Steve squints up at him... then promptly rolls them over so he’s on top, straddling his waist. “For starters, Jonathan’s tougher than he looks, *and* I fought actual demon hell monsters and won. You think I couldn’t take you?” He appears to be trying very hard not to smile.

Billy smirks. “You think you can take me? Then take me, pretty boy.”

Steve seems momentarily frozen, his jaw slightly slack, but then that moment passes and he’s draping himself over Billy and kissing him until Billy’s lungs burn for air, until he’s dizzy with it. Billy’s hands have found their way back under Steve’s shirt, but this time they push it higher, up until it’s caught under his armpits. Steve is mouthing at Billy’s jaw when he notices it and sits back, tugging the shirt over his head.

Billy’s seen Steve shirtless before, of course. He’s seen him *naked* on several occasions thanks to the group showers after basketball. His body is different than Billy remembers though, less boyish and a little broader at the shoulders, age filling in the inches. He’s got a touch of dark chest hair, a thicker line of hair from his navel downwards below the waistline of his jeans, and a smattering of moles.

He thinks his partialness is for more than Steve’s neck.

He thinks that Steve, still straddling his waist, is very *aware* of this.

He cages Billy in with his arms and kisses him again, gentler this time. That’s all they do for a couple of minutes, just kiss, and Billy thinks that should be so goddamn boring. Every person he’s ever been with has been a rush and tangle of limbs and emotions, a desperate slide of two bodies seeking something better than what they had in the moment, a brief reprieve from the bullshit of life. Truth was, though, he’d sought the comfort of a warm body not for the enjoyment of the sex, but for the desire to feel normal, to prove

to the voice in his head that sounded suspiciously like his father that he wasn't a fucking queer.

It had always been women.

It had always been... lackluster.

His whirlwind relationship with Beth hadn't even been *that*, if he was honest with himself. That had been nothing but pure destruction on both sides, a mutual dislike that had culminated in sex. Quick, dirty, loveless.

This was... not that.

Just from kissing, Billy is achingly hard.

Steve is too. They're pressed close enough together that Billy at least knows that much.

"Sit up," Steve says, breathless, and Billy does, their bodies pressing ever closer. Steve's quick to get Billy's shirt off and toss it aside so that their chests are pressed together, skin on glorious skin. His hands cup Billy's jaw, and he presses a kiss to his forehead, and it's so *tender*

"Fuck," Billy grits out, desperate.

He thinks of how this desperation is different than it ever has been, how it feels like this is all he's ever been made for. His hands slide over Steve's back and-- fuck-- he's shaking.

Steve's hand slides through Billy's hair, and he asks, softly, "Have you done this before?"

Billy huffs. "I'm not a fucking virgin, in case you forgot I have a kid."

Steve sees it for the defense mechanism it is. "You know that's not what I'm asking."

Billy closes his eyes, fights off the feeling of being exposed. "I'm fine," he says, still not answering the question.

"We don't have to," Steve says, kissing his temple. "We can take it slow."

"I already told you what I want," Billy says stubbornly, then, after a beat. "You... have."

"Yeah," says Steve. "I have."

"I never... not... all the way."

For all his talk about not being a virgin, he suddenly feels like one now. He thinks of the few heated kisses he'd traded with boys when he was young. He thinks of his head between the legs of a boy he can't even remember the name of. He thinks of how the fact that he can't remember the boy's name might be because his dad smacked his head against the dresser so hard when he found them that Billy saw stars.

He thinks of how he doesn't want to think about that now.

"Don't pussy out on me now, Steve," Billy says. "I'm not that fragile."

Steve shoves him back down (gently). He's at Billy's waist, popping the button of Billy's jeans and undoing the fly, pulling them down his legs underwear and all, and all Billy can really do is watch in wonder that this is actually happening as Steve undresses him entirely. His cock is curving towards his belly, flushed at the head, and Steve stares at it like a man at an oasis dying of thirst.

"You gonna do something or just stare, amigo?" Billy asks, stretching, preening a little. He's not quite as well-muscled as he once was (having a five-year-old really cuts into his workout time), but the hunger with which Steve stares at him makes him feel like a million fucking bucks. Besides, if there's one thing Billy's never been ashamed of, it's his body.

"Jesus," Steve hisses, and then he's quickly disposing of the rest of his clothes too.

Again, it's not the first time Billy's seen Steve naked... but it is the first time he's seen him naked in this context. He's definitely never seen Steve hard like this before, and if he was the younger, more

insecure Billy he once was, he'd probably be intimidated. Steve is uhh... *proportionately impressive* , to say the least. Not ungodly huge by any means, but still.

Whatever trepidation Billy *does* have is quickly squashed when Steve smiles and, very ungracefully, half-dives off the bed to go digging underneath it for the shoebox he produces.

"Really?" Billy says. "You still keep your spank bank material under your bed? You realize Mommy and Daddy aren't gonna go through your drawers now, right?"

"A curious five-year-old might," Steve says, opening the box, and okay, that's fair, but--

"Don't five-year-olds tend to hide under beds more than they go through drawers?"

"Do you wanna fuck or do you wanna question my life choices?"

"I can do both."

"Fuck you," Steve laughs.

"I thought that's what we were doing," Billy says, planting his foot on Steve's chest and shoving slightly. "Get over here, pretty boy."

Steve comes closer, but not as close as Billy anticipates. He bends sooner and gets his mouth around Billy's cock and-- oh. Oh, *fuck* .

Apparently kissing isn't the only thing Steve's mouth is good at. It's enough, at least, that Billy's hands fist the sheets and his toes curl.

Billy's always been good at keeping the effect things have on him to himself, but he's wide open emotionally right now. He knows this because he sees the corners of Steve's mouth twitch with delight when Billy reacts. He drags his tongue lewdly over the underside of his cock, his lips wet, and Billy wants to stare but can't because his eyes roll back in his head.

"Been a while for you?" Steve asks.

“Not as long as you,” Billy counters even though he doesn’t know if that’s true.

Steve, of course, can give sass as good as he can take it, so he eyeballs Billy’s dick and says, “You’re right. You’re not as long as me.”

“Fuck you,” Billy grits out around a moan as Steve strokes him as slowly as possible.

“I thought that’s what we were doing,” Steve grins, then climbs over Billy’s body again, an arm on either side of his head. His playfulness fades some, replaced with the familiar softness when he asks, “How do you want...?”

Billy stares up at him, a flicker of fear in his chest. If they do this, it’s not just fooling around anymore. There’s no going back from here. He can’t say that his dad was wrong about him.

Then there’s something *else* .

There is...

There is the realization that he doesn’t *care* .

Billy’s hands slide over Steve’s shoulders. “I just want you,” he says, and it feels too honest, but he still doesn’t care. “Whatever way.”

Steve hesitates, thinking it over. His eyes never leave Billy’s face. His hand slides through Billy’s hair. “Okay,” he says, voice soft and a little breathless, and Billy thinks wildly that the entire world could collapse around them right now and it would be okay. He would be fine as long as Steve kept looking at him like that.

“We’ll take it slow,” Steve says, a hand trailing down over Billy’s chest and stomach, memorizing the lines of muscle. Billy’s eyelashes flutter a little, body arching slightly into the touch. Steve touches him like he’s delicate, like he’s *special* , and a large part of him wants to push at that, to make him play rougher because he doesn’t deserve any softness. Steve was probably like this with his wife, he thinks, tender and careful. Steve is leaving kisses on his neck, on his chest. It’s almost more than he can bear.

He can't.

He can't bear it.

"You don't have to go slow," Billy says abruptly, heart hammering in his chest. Steve looks up from Billy's abdomen, expression curious. Billy stares down at him, and he feels on the verge of a nervous breakdown as he says, "Just fuckin' do it already."

He thinks it sounds like eagerness, and on some level it is, but...

Steve crawls back up his body again, drapes himself over it like a blanket, and he just... kisses him. Sweet. Chaste. And...

Billy squeezes his eyes shut, and he's shaking again, God, he's *shaking*
--

"It's okay."

Steve's hands are on his face.

"It's okay."

Billy breathes.

It's okay.

Steve doesn't speed up, doesn't make his touch any harder. His hand grips Billy's hip though, slides down his thigh, pushes his legs apart. He smiles and says, "You know, I've thought about this a lot."

"Am I living up to your imagination so far?" Billy asks, going for teasing, but his voice is still a little wobbly.

"To be fair, your clothes never did leave much to the imagination," Steve says, but quickly adds, "but this is better than what my brain could come up with, no doubt. You're... so beautiful."

He says it with awe, like Billy and his battered, tired body is worth worship.

"I dreamed about more than this though," Steve says, uncapping a

bottle from his shoebox.

“Yeah? What else? You about to share some freaky, kinky stuff?”

“Having coffee in the morning,” Steve says. “Taking Katie and Hannah to the park together. Falling asleep on the sofa watching basketball.”

It's such casual conversation that Billy almost doesn't notice that Steve has pressed a finger against his entrance. He keeps talking, and Billy can't really split his focus between the two moments. He wouldn't think words would grab his attention more than... well, *this*, but...

“I dream about all kinds of stupid things,” he continues. “Letting you take me to California so you can teach me how to surf, and you rubbing aloe on my sunburn after. I dream about you... laying next to me, singing me to sleep after I have a nightmare. I dream that I sleep through the night because I feel safe because you're there. Everyone I love is here, in this home that we built together.”

Billy inhales.

“It's pretty stupid,” Steve says with a self-deprecating grin.

God.

Billy loves him so much.

“The only thing stupid about it is that you waited until you had a finger in my ass to tell me,” Billy says.

There's a beat.

Then they both crack at the same time, Steve's forehead pressing to Billy's as they laugh. It feels like something has shaken loose, broken open inside Billy. It feels good.

“I was trying to keep you relaxed,” Steve explains. “It's easier that way.”

“Don't worry, pretty boy,” Billy says, kissing him. “I'm pretty fucking

relaxed. You want me to roll over?”

“No. I... I wanna see your face.”

Billy's head thumps against the pillow. He thinks of all the times he's fucked other people. In the darkness, a back sloping before him, a face buried in the pillow, a face he won't remember or care about. He remembers fucking Beth on a mattress without a bed frame, having sex because there was nothing else to do and he was sick of smoking weed but sicker of going home to his own empty apartment. He remembers her on his waist, riding him. He remembers her shoulders speckled with freckles, her long blonde hair slightly stiff and wavy from the salt water that had settled in it at the beach earlier that day. He remembers pretending not to see the marks on the insides of her arms and the fact that she wouldn't open her eyes to look at him. He remembers wondering what it was that she was thinking about as she climaxed, as he shuddered against the mattress in time with her and tried to tell himself that this was love. He remembers how she laid against his chest and pretended to be asleep so that he wouldn't notice she was crying.

He remembers that her eyes were brown. He remembers that all he'd wanted was for her to look at him while they fucked with those soft, brown eyes.

He thinks maybe he's been in love with Steve a lot longer than he's wanted to admit.

Steve's prepped him. Billy only fully realizes this because he's leaned back away from him to slide on a condom. For all of his sass earlier, Steve looks nervous. Billy is suddenly aware that the lamp on the bedside table is on, casting the room and Steve in a warm, soft light. The bed is on a frame. There's no sound of sirens out the window. There's no track marks on Steve's arms. Steve is looking at him.

And Billy doesn't have to go home after this is over.

Billy reaches out his hand and takes Steve's wrist, pulling him back over him. Billy's fingers lace with Steve's, and he says, “It's okay.”

Steve presses inside.

It's a stretch and burn Billy's not familiar with, but Steve sticks to his guns about going slow. He takes his time, watching Billy's face for any sign of discomfort.

The stubborn son of a bitch.

It's like he's looked directly into the deepest, darkest, most corroded parts of Billy's soul, the parts that nestle in the ghosts of old wounds, that sprawl themselves across his ribcage and lungs and heart, that echo their words in the silence between each heartbeat. The ones that tell him *you don't deserve softness. You don't deserve him. You coward. You faggot. What the fuck is wrong with you?*

He has looked at these beasts that sound like his father, that sound like himself, that *are* himself. He has looked at them, flipped them a double bird, and with one look and no words said *I'm going to prove them wrong* .

There's nothing wrong with you.

It's nothing to be ashamed of.

Steve is fully seated in him, and Billy's chest is rising and falling, a flush spreading down his neck. He feels full and stretched, and it's simultaneously too much and not enough. "Fuck," he gasps as Steve starts moving. It's only now that Steve actually starts picking up the pace, a desperation building in him that he seemed to have put on hold earlier. His face is red. His breathing is heavy. He's fucking *gorgeous* , and Billy has to get his hands on him. He drags Steve to him, letting himself be bent nearly in half so that he can kiss Steve, deep and longing. Steve's a damned good kisser, but Billy thinks he can at least give him a run for his money, and the moan he elicits from Steve with it lights up every nerve ending.

Steve's not one to be outdone though, so he shifts his angle slightly and *oh* --

Billy makes a sound he's not sure he's ever made before, and he feels Steve grin against his lips. He pulls his hips back and then hits the same spot again, and Billy's body spasms a little. Steve swallows Billy's sounds, sucks on his bottom lip, lets his mouth trail to the

hinge of his jaw.

“You can touch yourself,” Steve says into his ear, voice low and sensual. “Hope you weren’t expecting me to do all the work.”

Billy is about to throw out a snarky comment, but then Steve hits the spot inside him again and his ability to form words short-circuits. All he can manage is a heated groan. It works in his favor regardless, though, because whatever sound Billy makes seems to go straight to Steve’s groin. His pace increases, and he gets *loud* .

“Oh, fuck,” Billy curses, then reaches between them to start stroking himself in rhythm with Steve’s thrusts.

Steve is fucking *obscene* , fucking *shameless* with his noise, and Billy hopes he’s at least aware enough of that to keep it down next time they do this because the girls will likely be there.

It’s a little insane to realize he’s already thinking about *next time* .

Thinking about coffee in the morning and taking Katie and Hannah to the park together and falling asleep on the sofa watching basketball.

It’s so fucking stupid and fucking romantic and so much more than Billy deserves or has ever thought to ask for. It’s so pathetic, he thinks, that this is what’s getting him teetering towards the edge so much faster than just the sex. The sex is goddamned *great* too, but Billy’s never wanted for sex. He’s been able to get it wherever and whenever he wanted.

This, though... *This* ...

This *promise* of something else, of a future, of something worth living for, of something worth *being* for is more than he can handle.

His free hand scrambles, tugs Steve down by the nape, and he’s kissing him sloppily, a drag of tongue and scrape of teeth. Steve is talking, but it’s babbling that Billy barely registers it in his current state. ‘ *So good for me.* ’ ‘ *God, I’m so close.* ’ ‘ *Fuck, I love you so much.* ’

He’s not too far gone to notice that last one, but honestly he doesn’t have the time to address it because the sentence makes the heat

pooling in his stomach release from its coil, makes him spasm, makes him crescendo into glorious bliss.

Unlike Steve, Billy's sounds are quieter, borne out of years of keeping things secret, of hands clamped over mouths and shuddering, shaky breaths into pillowcases. He's nearly silent as he comes, eyes squeezing shut and mouth hanging open and the sensation is too much, too much.

Steve's face is buried in his neck, and he's quaking against him, and Billy realizes that he's right there with him, euphoric waves of ecstasy rolling through him in tandem.

It feels like it never ends, but eventually it does, but Billy still shakes with aftershocks even as Steve pulls out. Billy opens his eyes, and Steve's hovering above him, face still flushed and shining with sweat, his breath shuddering out of him. Billy wonders momentarily why Steve hasn't moved away yet, but then he realizes he's got his legs wrapped around Steve's waist. He also realizes that Steve hasn't moved away because he doesn't want to.

Billy's hand slides over the hinge of Steve's jaw, and he kisses him again, slow and soft. It only lasts for a moment or two before they part, and Steve rests his forehead against Billy's.

"Fuck," Steve says, and Billy can hear the smile in his voice. Billy untangles his legs from Steve's waist and lets them drop like the dead weight they are. He tucks Steve's head under his chin, hand sliding through Steve's sweat-damp hair. His heart his humming in his chest.

"I'm gonna be fuckin' sore tomorrow," Billy complains good-naturedly. "Fuckin' asshole."

"Yeah, that is probably where you'll be sore," Steve jokes, thumb rubbing small circles on Billy's chest. "You can't keep me on top of you like this the whole night. We'll get glued together with your spunk."

"Why don't you lick it off me, pretty boy?"

Steve groans slightly. "You are strongly overestimating my virility,

you animal.”

“Your *virility* ?” Billy queries. Steve laughs a little, and Billy finds an inkling of strength to roll them over so Steve is flat on his back and Billy is on top of him. He’s beautiful in this warm light, his eyes grabbing honey-gold flecks, his still flushed face soft and adoring in the rush of post-coital euphoria.

“Shut up,” Steve laughs. His laugh makes Billy tingle all the way down to his fingertips. He’s so fucking gorgeous, and Billy realizes he doesn’t have to keep that thought to himself.

He doesn’t have to... but he does.

Old habits and all that.

“Will you stay?” Steve asks after a beat or two. His expression is still soft and open, but there’s a slight crease between his eyebrows. “I mean, I’m not-- that’s... I’m not asking for forever. Just, y’know, tonight.”

Billy answers with, “I’m not going anywhere,” and doesn’t tell Steve that the answer would be the same even if he *did* ask him to stay forever. He doesn’t want to push this fragile thing to its breaking point. He’s had a lot of experience in wrecking everything he’s ever loved.

And he loves Steve.

So, he reaches over the edge of the bed and grabs his shirt, cleans them both off with it. Steve tosses the condom in the bin and shoves the shoebox off the edge of the bed with little fanfare, and then they’re entangled again. They kiss, and Billy sighs into it. Like breathing. Like coming home.

I love you so much.

He closes his eyes, and he does his own waiting this time. He waits until Steve’s body drapes heavier, until his breathing evens out, and then he whispers into his hair.

“I love you too.”

Author's Note:

i'm on [tumblr](#).